Osborne Organics

March 14, 2014

Senator Ed Meyer, Co-chair
Representative Linda Gentile, Co-chair
Environmental Committee
Connecticut Legislature

Re: Senate Bill 443

You have heard and will continue to hear from members of the medical and scientific community about the dangers of pesticides, especially when used in those areas where children play. My comments here will not repeat that same information, but rather present to you the information that we have the science and technology to be able to grow grass and maintain children's playing fields to high levels of expectations without using synthetic pesticides.

I had hoped to be able to testify in person, but business commitments will not allow it. I have worked as a consultant and educator in the field of natural turf management for the past fifteen years. My focus is transitioning large amounts of acreage from conventional management to natural, alternative programs. I have worked for many school districts and municipalities around the country, as well as large residential estate properties. We have successfully reduced and eliminated pesticide use on these properties and manage the turf to meet communicated expectations. I also work on a volunteer basis with the National Park Service on the Midwest Region Turf Stewardship Project, where I am currently managing ten national parks without the use of synthetic pesticides.

We follow a systems approach to management that is designed to put a series of preventative steps in place that will solve problems. This approach is based on three concepts. It involves the use of natural organic product where use is governed by soil testing, the acknowledgment that the soil biomass plays a critical role in fertility and turf health, and very specific and sound horticultural practices. The goal of a natural turf management program is to create turf that is both aesthetically pleasing and meets site objectives and at the same time this turf will provide a surface that will be healthy and free from toxic chemicals. The products and programs are designed to utilize materials and adopt cultural practices that will avoid runoff or leaching of nutrients and control products into the water table as well as being protective of children health.

This is a "feed the soil" approach that supports the natural processes that nature has already put in motion. This is no longer anecdotal, but rather founded on scientific

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principles that allow us to create soils and systems to grow grass and keep weed, insect, and disease pressures in check. It is my experience that this approach will build a soil environment rich in microbiology that will produce strong, healthy turf that will be able to meet communicated expectations.

You have probably heard that this approach is too expensive and will place a financial burden on school districts and municipalities throughout the state of Connecticut. We are now experiencing technological advancements in the development of alternative products that allows us to create programs to meet the highest level of communicated expectations at a cost not significantly higher than the conventional approach. New technology has emerged in the last two years, is backed by science, and has proven in the field to deliver the expectations that we are after.

We have been managing grass in a manner that has been dictated by corporations for the purpose of generating revenue. Certainly there is product involved in a natural system, but it is not the sole focus of the program. Another product that presents itself for the purpose of revenue generation is the genetic engineering of Kentucky bluegrass. There is absolutely no reason why this type of product would ever be needed in the real world except to generate revenue. This is another example of product coming to market without a valuable purpose in mind.

I urge you to take this all into account as you deliberate on this issue. I don't think any of us can deny the issues that have arisen in the past sixty years regarding chemical use to grow grass. I would be more than happy to talk with any of you about this issue and the realities of our successes in managing school district and municipal turf without pesticide use.

Respectfully,

Charles E. "Chip" Osborne Jr.

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